

DOHA FORUM 2013 – THE SPEECH OF HIS HIGHNESS SHEIKH HAMAD BIN KHALIFA AL-THANI, EMIR OF THE STATE OF QATAR

The Doha Forum and Enriching the Middle East's Economic Future Conference

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In the name of God the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Your Excellencies and Highnesses,

Honourable audience,

At the outset, I would like to welcome all of you to the 13th edition of the Doha Forum, wishing you a pleasant stay in Doha.

The Forum has become an international platform where there is interaction of ideas on important regional and international issues, in order to reach visions that would form bases for serious collective action toward implementing those visions in a manner ensuring the wisest possible common interest.

There is no doubt that the world order has witnessed successive changes, not only in political domains, but also in economic, social, intellectual and humanitarian fields in general.

In this context, the Arab world was one of the most prominent regional arenas that were affected by these changes, making the current stage that the region is undergoing now, one the most important stages of its history.

One of the most prominent features that we notice today in the Arab world is the peoples' call for comprehensive reform, and the pursuit to achieve that by various ways and means, first and foremost realising political participation in the management of public affairs.

We must not forget that the prevalence of poverty, unemployment, absence of decent means of living and violation of human rights under the reign of autocratic, repressive and corrupt regimes, were the driving forces behind the unfolding of Arab revolutions that have been targeting popular participation in the political and economic decision-making.

Achieving this goal requires beginning with developing the institutions that guarantee the scale of this participation. This cannot succeed unless coupled with plans to disseminate democratic awareness, and an active effort in the sustainable development considered as an inseparable face of the process of comprehensive reform based on a modern education system. Thus we ensure the practice of respecting others' opinions to achieve social interaction based on dialogue rather than violence.

Then the consolidation of peace and stability at the national level would be possible, and a general combustion in favour of joint interests of the community would prevail, which would be reflected in the promotion of the democratic process because it will not be just a process of casting votes in the ballots boxes during specific periods.

In this regard, I would like to recall that our Islamic faith incorporates a parallel democratic approach, an approach that is based on the principle of consultation and justice.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe that the Arab peoples would not give up realising their legitimate goals for reform, popular participation, development, strengthening and protecting human dignity in spite of the obstacles encountered by them.

It is better and safer to achieve change gradually through reform and dialogue, because a path of a peaceful gradual change with a clear goal is less risky and more reliable, especially in countries with diverse communities.

I am confident that those who reject reform and change and are unable to understand the realities of the age and modern societies' needs are bound to be change by the necessities of history and the passage of time, as people neither live on slogans nor are they only satisfied with ideologies.

We have often drawn attention to what I said earlier on several occasions, not as bragging of what we have achieved gradually in Qatar, but to prove that what we had done was indispensable in the current historical age.

That is why we feel sorrow and grief to see the brotherly Syrian people's revolution entering its third year without a clear prospect to stop the bloody conflict, which has left behind tens of thousands of innocent victims, millions of displaced people and refugees, in addition to massive material destruction as a result of the adherence to military solution by the Syrian regime.

It is no longer acceptable for the powerful countries in the international community not to act to put an end to this terrible tragedy and the worsening humanitarian disaster, while at the same time they want to determine the identity of those who defend the Syrian people under various pretexts.

Sadly, this happens after the failure of all Arab and international initiatives to push the Syrian regime to listen to the voice of reason.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is a very important issue that I would like to address to complete the picture of the political landscape, which we are going to tackle, i.e. the settlement of the Palestinian issue and the conflict in the Middle East.

We have heard in the past that reform has to be put aside until a peaceful settlement is reached with Israel, by everyone should realise that such thinking is no longer tenable after the Arab Spring revolutions, which were necessitated by the propensity towards reform and pursuit to implement the ensuing outcomes, and that could no be achieved unless it is coupled with the quest to find a peaceful settlement for the Palestinian cause and the Middle East conflict.

The reason for this is that the Arab Spring revolutions have set Israel in direct confrontation today with the Arab peoples and not just their rulers. Those peoples would not accept any more that negotiations or the political process be an end in itself, and consequently there must be a serious effort to achieve a just peace as the main objective and goal of the peace process.

Our region would not witness stability and security unless and until there is just solution to the Palestinian cause and withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, on the basis of resolutions of the international and Arab legality and the right of the Palestinian people to exercise all the inalienable national rights through establishing their independent state with its capital in Al-Quds (Jerusalem).

For this, the settlement practices and Judaisation of Jerusalem in addition to being a violation of international law, they undermine the foundations of the two state solution, and Israel should not lose the opportunity provided by the Arab Peace Initiative.

Honourable audience,

Development, in its broader sense, and the economic, environmental, technological and resource related challenges encountering its realisation have become an issue that determines the survival, role and progress of any society in this world.

The flaws that marred achieving development have been a major factor in the transformations witnessed by the Arab region, and on the basis of our firm belief in the importance of international cooperation to realise development as a cornerstone of security and stability at various national, regional, and international levels, the State of Qatar as an effective and key partner in sustainable development has spared no effort in implementing its international commitments on providing development assistance to developing countries to enable them to execute the Millennium Development Goals, particularly, in education to enhancing health care as well as combatting poverty and unemployment.

In this context, the unfinished task of Doha Free Trade negotiations must be finalised in order to promote world trade, as well as eliminate trade barriers, establishing a motivating environment for local and foreign investment and create appropriate partnerships between public and private sectors.

In conclusion, I hope that the deliberations of this Forum will help crystalize the visions and rules that meet peoples' aspirations concerning the subjects and issues under discussion by the Forum.

Thank you.